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CLAYTON DELA CRUZ OF ILWU, LOCAL 142; PCPA; ILWU MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

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HARVEY SCHWARTZ 00:00:11

Okay, before we start, can you tell me— Give us your name and where were you born, and when you were born?

CLAYTON DE LA CRUZ 00:00:18

My name is Clayton [?Belleview?] Dela Cruz.

HARVEY 00:00:20

Okay.

CLAYTON 00:00:21

I was born in Waimea, Kaua'i, Hawai'i. I was born on March the third, 1947.

HARVEY 00:00:29

Okay.

HARVEY 00:00:34

Can you tell us a little bit about your parents, their backgrounds, what kind of jobs they held? Were they active in the union?

CLAYTON 00:00:41

My father immigrated from the Philippines in 1927, and I believe it was September 30, 1927 when he arrived.

HARVEY 00:00:51

What's his first name?

CLAYTON 00:00:52

His name was Flor T. de Dela Cruz. F-L-O-R was his first name.

HARVEY 00:00:57

Okay.

CLAYTON 00:00:57

He was— He signed a contract with the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association to work in the sugar plantation. He had his first original contract. He signed a contract to work with the sugar company. His pay was \$20 a month, or he could convert it to pesos, which is what the Philippines used, to \$40 pesos a month. He was required to work 10 hours a day for 20 days in a month. And my father then did his contract and he moved on to other kinds of jobs. He did not go back to the Philippines. My mom was a maid. She worked for a private landowner who had a sugar company and she was born on the island of Kaua'i. She was born in, I believe, in 1917. She met my dad later on. They got married. They both worked in a union. When my father retired, he was working for the county of Kaua'i. They were unionized: United Public Workers, but my dad did not join the union.

HARVEY 00:02:22

How come?

CLAYTON 00:02:24

My dad did not join a union because of his religion. He was— His religion forbid him to join a union. But I took this all into account, and my mom worked for private store owners. She wasn't also in the union. So when I became a union member later on in years, they were kind of surprised, but they didn't give me any problems, you know.

HARVEY 00:02:48

That's good. What did they tell you about what it was like being in the islands in those early days in the late '20s and early '30s, and the war itself?

CLAYTON 00:02:57

It was kind of hard because you know, my mom grew up in a family of nine. My dad was a single person, came from the Philippines and he had to send money back to the Philippines for his family: his brothers and sisters and his parents. He moved to Oahu in the late '30s. And he started to run a taxi business. And on the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed, he was driving his taxi. And he said, "What are the— What's happening? They're getting maneuvers again." You know, he saw these planes flying around, and loud noises, all of the bombs falling and then he finally realized, "Hey, wait a minute, something is happening here. This is for real."

So he said— All he did was he went to a place and parked and he waited til all announcements came out that we're at war, Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. That's how he got to know that the war was on. My mom—at that time, they weren't married—she was living on Kaua'i. She had, as soon as this happened, because she was Japanese ancestry, a few days later came to ask questions of my grandfather. But my grandfather worked for the Robinsons and the Robinsons kind of protected him and they said that he's not a Japanese national, they will go back to Japan or whatever. And so he could stay and keep on working. But they also, remember, there was a lot of blackouts at night. Their windows were darkened, they could not show any light. There was also— They had

to— There was curfews, you know, they could not go out. And all this time, my mom and my dad never met yet, but they kind of explained to me what the situation was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

HARVEY 00:04:45

Yeah. Yeah. Wow. What was it like growing up on Hawai'i? You know, you're born in '47, '57, '67, in that range.

CLAYTON 00:04:54

When I was growing up, I realized that I was a child of "mixed marriages." Because my father was Filipino, and my mom was Japanese. So I kind of asked a question to my mom. You know, "How did my grandfather and my grandmother take it?" Because Japanese in the Philippines were of different cultures and nationalities. And my mom said it was very hard because when my dad started taking out my mom, my grandparents did not like the idea that my mom was going with a Filipino, you know, but they eventually fell in love and love, I guess, is stronger than all the prejudices that they had and they got married. In the end, my grandfather accepted it. My grandmother accepted it, but she just lived for a little while and then she had a stroke when she passed away when, you know, when— I think I was about one year old.

So, my grandfather eventually came to live with us when he was older and retired. So, my uncles and aunties on the Japanese side, at first, they did not like the idea, but then they came to be very good friends with my dad. My dad was a hardworking guy. And my oldest uncle, who had a business by itself, became very close with my dad. So all those years afterwards, it was okay. But growing up being by different cultures, was a little bit different, but my mom and dad kind of took care of that because they said that "No, no, we love. You guys are okay." You know, Hawai'i has a lot of that kind of situations.

HARVEY 00:06:38

It's interesting that there was tension over that because Hawai'i is so diverse and so mixed. Everybody's kind of mixed in Hawai'i. Yes. But there still was that cultural—

CLAYTON 00:06:50

There still was these cultural differences, you know, because Japanese came from Japan. You know, their main religion was Buddhist. Right? My dad was— he was a Christian. And, and I guess the cultures and the different religions did not, you know, they all had their own, they did not— They did not fight with each other, but there was this, there was this difference between all their beliefs. So, they kind of [?unintelligible?] my dad is a different type of religion. My mom is a Buddhist, you know, I'm wired to get it together. And that question. But in the end, you know, my family, they all love me now on the Japanese side, you know. (laughs) We've gotten older, and it's okay.

HARVEY 00:07:33

Did you have any religious background or leaning herself?

CLAYTON 00:07:38

No, I did not have a really, I kind of grew up as a Christian. My father was a Seventh Day Adventist. And so he converted my mom from Buddhism, to being a Seventh Day Adventist, and I learned later that they kind of just did not believe in unions, you know, so that's why my father was exempt from being a union member. He did not pay union dues, or he had to pay his dues to some other charity or whatever. But he was not a United Public Workers member.

HARVEY 00:08:11

Okay, even though he worked for—

CLAYTON 00:08:13

He worked for the county, yes, he worked.

HARVEY 00:08:15

Okay. What about— Did you have any politics? Did your parents have any political involvement at all?

CLAYTON 00:08:22

Yes, my mom— My mom's oldest brother ran for public office. And in those days before statehood it was called, on my island it was called the Board of Supervisors. It wasn't a council member. He was a Board of Supervisors member who, along with the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, ran the county of Kaua'i and that was before statehood. See, and my uncle used to involve us very young kids and he used to recruit us to pass brochures on his background so he could get some votes and etcetera. And my dad kind of— He kind of voted. He voted for the politicians that he wanted. He kind of followed— he helped my uncle. And we always campaigned for him.

HARVEY 00:09:13

What was your uncle--a Democrat?

CLAYTON 00:09:16

Uncle was a Democrat

HARVEY 00:09:17

Democrat.

CLAYTON 00:09:18

Yes.

HARVEY 00:09:18

Okay. Tell me about your youth, you know, schooling, that sort of thing. Growing up. What it's like growing up in Hawai'i?

CLAYTON 00:09:27

When I grew up, I was schooled first— I did not attend kindergarten. My mom held me back. So the first day of school I was a first grader, and I went to a private school. I went to a private school until I was in the eighth grade. In the eighth grade, I graduated from the private school. Then I transferred to high school there, a local high school. And then I graduated from high school. So I had my normal eight years of elementary school, and four years of high school.

HARVEY 00:09:58

What was the name of the high school?

CLAYTON 00:09:59

Waimea High School.

HARVEY 00:10:00

Okay, so it's in—

CLAYTON 00:10:02

It in Waimea, Kaua'i, Hawai'i.

HARVEY 00:10:04

Kaua'i, yeah. Did you play sports or activities? Go in the army after high school, anything like that?

CLAYTON 00:10:11

No, I did not play sports. I worked during school.

HARVEY 00:10:17

What did you do?

CLAYTON 00:10:18

I was a— I worked at a store as a grocery boy and a delivery boy. So every day after school, because I had my license at an early age of 15, I could drive the grocery truck. In those days, there were sugar camps. And a lot of the workers at the sugar camps ordered their basics from the store. So after school, I would go down to the store, and the clerks already made out the orders. I would load it up to an old Fargo truck and deliver it to all these camps and to all the house numbers. And I'd take some orders if they wanted some other stuff, and I'd come home. So I did not play any sports. I wanted to play football, but my mom said, "You're a little bit too small." At the time— I was pretty fast at the time. They wanted me to go to track. I did not go out to track. I said, "Nah, nah. I gotta go work and help you guys out." So that's what I did.

HARVEY 00:11:18

When you went to the camps, did anybody tell you anything about the union at that time, when you went to encounter with people at the camps?

CLAYTON 00:11:25

Oh, yes! I knew about unions from my classmates.

HARVEY 00:11:29

Your classmates!

CLAYTON 00:11:30

Yeah. And also I saw the strike, the 1958 sugar strike. I was old enough to remember that. I also asked my dad, "Why are all those people over there all constructing a building in the camp?" And he said, "Well, they went to the soup kitchen." And I said, "What's a soup kitchen? What's a strike?" He said, "Oh, they're on strike. They're not working because they don't have the wages that they want. They don't have the kinds of stuff that they need, you know, maybe help the medical problems or whatever. So they're on strike."

"They're not working. They're going against the company."

I said, "So what do you mean about— What's a soup kitchen?" He said, "Well, they go there and they cook enough food so that all the workers can have some food for their families." And I see them walking with their pots and pans to the soup kitchen, and they did bring it home and their family would have a meal. My wife while they were married, she told me that: Yeah, every time she hated to go to the soup kitchen because she had to carry a pot. Her dad was working for the plantation, you know, and she'd come home. She says, "Whew."

So I told my dad, "You're kind of lucky you work for the county. You're not on strike and you don't have to go do that stuff." And my dad said, "Yes." But he said, "But you know, I can't blame them because they need to eat, and they have to do what they want to do and they need to strike."

HARVEY 00:12:52

You say your dad's— excuse me, your mother's dad— was working on the plantation?

CLAYTON 00:12:58

No, my wife's dad.

HARVEY 00:13:02

What did he tell you about what it was like working in the sugar industry?

CLAYTON 00:13:08

Well, my father-in-law was a big Hawaiian German guy, and his family came from Germany. He married— His father married a Hawaiian lady.

HARVEY 00:13:18

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:13:19

And they were first generation Germans, I guess, coming over from Germany back in the 1800s. And my father-in-law always said that, "Hey, they still get prejudice there in the plantations, because they issued you [?bumbo?] numbers, and they'd go by your nationality. He said the lower numbers were all Caucasians, and then the next numbers were Hawaiians, and then they'd go up, up, up, you know. Like the Japanese had certain numbers in the 2000s, and the Filipinos had a different numbering system. The Portuguese had a different numbering system. So I said, "What's your number?" He said, "My number is 37." So— Because he was half-Caucasian, and half-Hawaiian, so it was way down. And he said, he used to tell me, "That's why they had camps." He says, "You know, you had a Hawaiian camp here," and he said, "all the Hawaiian people live here. You had the Spanish camp there, you had the Filipino camps here. You had all the single, single men for housing, the Japanese camp was there." So he said, "You always call me"— And he said, "You know, my name was Kruse." K-R-U-S-E. That's [?unintelligible?] maiden name. And he says, "All the Japanese when I was growing up," he said, "They used to say, 'Ay! You come from Kah-ruh-zee Camp.'"

"What is a 'Kah-ruh-zee Camp'?" See, he didn't understand what they meant by "Kah-ruh-zee Camp." He thought it was like "Crazy Camp" or something. But then he found out because of their accent, they were trying to say "Kruse Camp."

HARVEY 00:14:45

Do you know why the camps were segregated by different ethnic groups?

CLAYTON 00:14:51

I guess so, the way the plantation wanted them to, you know—

HARVEY 00:14:57

Why would they want that?

CLAYTON 00:15:00

I guess they just wanted that so that, you know, they couldn't intermingle; and then, you know, everybody got together and you know if there is something wrong and you have all these guys going against you instead of just one nationality. And basically I think that's one of the main reasons they separated everybody from each other.

HARVEY 00:15:20

Did anybody ever tell you about the national— excuse me— the Filipino Labor Union, and how things were separated in the '20s? Did you ever hear stories about that at all?

CLAYTON 00:15:31

Yes, I heard stories about that.

HARVEY 00:15:32

What were they like? What were the stories like?

CLAYTON 00:15:35

The stories, they were different, you know, they came from the Philippines, they kind of separated them. And there were a lot of single guys from the Philippines. You know, so they didn't have any wife or family and so, you know, they were, they were treated a little bit different from everybody else. And I remember hearing the story about— I forgot his name. Manlapit? Manlapit, I think it was. Do you know? So I asked someone, "What is this?" He said, "Oh, he's trying to form a union. And the company's called all these these Hawaiian cowboys, you know, they form some sort of like a posse, and they try to get all these workers to disband and not hold any meetings."

HARVEY 00:16:01

Pablo Manlapit.

CLAYTON 00:16:16

And then he said, one day, they all went up on the hill, right where the Filipino people were meeting. And they started, you know, telling them to disperse. They didn't. They started shooting at these people!

CLAYTON 00:16:30

So I remember an old guy telling me this, and then he showed me the place where, you know, they were all lined up. I asked the Hawaiian lady at one time, "what happened here?" My father was one of those guys that they recruited. And he said, "And you know, they shot those people and all of the people they brought it to, to the police station or the— and they just left them there!" And I said, "Wow!" This is, you know, this is back in the '20s. And, you know, I've got firsthand stories from the lady whose father was one the guys that they recruited as posse— Because most of the Hawaiians were hunters. They all had rifles!

HARVEY 00:17:08

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. What jobs did you begin to get as you got older, after high school?

CLAYTON 00:17:16

After high school?

HARVEY 00:17:17

Did you go into the Army at all?

CLAYTON 00:17:18

I did not go into the Army. After high school, I had a big burden. I had to support a family. I had a son, and my son was—I started working for a contractor. And the contractor was wanting to build homes, etcetera. And I started as a laborer. I mixed cement by hand, and hauled lumber by hand, and me and this other fellow who just came out of the Army worked for a little while. Then I said "this job is a little bit hard!" So I applied for a job at a service station. I did service cars, I pumped gas at that time. I fixed tires. And then one day, my father-in-law, who worked at the plantation— Was good friends with the Employee Relations Director people, and he said, "Hey, why don't you get my son-in-law a job?"

So this secretary, this lady, came over to me— Said, "Hey, can you go over to the plantation, you come over and you sign up, and then we can interview you, and maybe you can get a job." So I did. And at that time, the plantation was already in the union. And I knew what I was getting into. My father-in-law said, "It's a good job. You're gonna have medical." My wife was pregnant at the time. I started in February of 1966. And I got full coverage for my son, my wife. My son wasn't born— he was born in March, but I already had coverage for him when he was born. Medical, etcetera, dental, whatever—And my wife and I and my son, my first son, you know, we had a medical plan. And I started on the bottom of the plantation doing labor jobs.

HARVEY 00:18:59

What kind of jobs? Can you describe that work?

CLAYTON 00:19:00

I worked first as a knapsack sprayer.

HARVEY 00:19:04

As what?

CLAYTON 00:19:05

A knapsack sprayer. A knapsack sprayer is one who carries a steel tank. It's aerated—you pump air inside—then you pump herbicide inside and you go into the cane fields and you spray all those weeds in the grass that, you know, it's killing the cane. And it's called a knapsack sprayer and the local people call it "[?subidong?]". It's a language that they use. I think the Philippines had a word for that: "[?subidong?]". I worked for two years as a knapsack sprayer. But I made a lot of money at that time because it was on contract. And I made more than the journey worker, but I had to work a lot harder because, I still, it's a physically labor-hard job. You walk up and down every day just shooting.

HARVEY 00:19:53

This is [ILWU,] Local 142

CLAYTON 00:19:54

This is Local 142.

HARVEY 00:19:55

Okay.

CLAYTON 00:19:56

Then I transferred to a heavy equipment operator. I got a job as a heavy equipment operator. In the cane fields, you need to take care of the fields after they harvest it. You smooth it all over; you make ditches, lines where you plant cane, etcetera. So I started to work as a heavy equipment operator. I drove bulldozers, I drove what they call backhoes, all of that kind of jobs until— I think about several years, then the plantation offered

openings for journey workers. So I applied. I got to be an apprentice in the carpenter shop area, and then I became a carpenter, and then later on a journeyman carpenter.

HARVEY 00:20:42

Oh, you did?

CLAYTON 00:20:42

Yes.

HARVEY 00:20:43

Okay. All this is in Local 142? Not—

CLAYTON 00:20:45

This is all part of the plantation— sugar plantation and Local 142 negotiated—

HARVEY 00:20:52

So the carpenter work was not under the United Brotherhood of Carpenters? It's still under 142?

CLAYTON 00:20:55

No it's under 142. Because the plantation had all these homes that they rented out. So homes had to be repaired. They also had to build new bridges, new whatever for the sugar water to come down in flumes, etcetera. And so the carpenters were there. They also had plumbers who had to take care of all of those homes and all of those issues with the water. Electricians had to take care of all of the pumps in the fields to pump the water to take care of the electricity coming down from the mountains and also the electricity in the homes.

HARVEY 00:21:29

Wow.

CLAYTON 00:21:29

So there was, you know, a lot of journeyman type there. Not only sugar, sugar planters and you know, whoever, and sugar haulers, etcetera. It's all different.

HARVEY 00:21:43

How many years did you do that?

CLAYTON 00:21:45

1966. I worked at the plantation until about 1982.

HARVEY 00:21:55

During that period of time from '68 to '80, did you get involved in the union at all, doing union activity at all?

CLAYTON 00:22:01

Yes, I did. In 1969, we were having some troubles negotiating a contract. And this is a statewide contract: Local 142 sugar contract. I was asked— I was still working just about finishing up with my herbicides job.

CLAYTON 00:22:20

I was asked to be a steward in that department. And I said, "What's the steward?" So they kind of explained to me what a steward was. So I had to go to meetings. And then I transferred over as a tractor operator, and they said, "You still want to be a steward? You can be a steward at the tractor division."

CLAYTON 00:22:38

I said, "Yeah, okay."

CLAYTON 00:22:39

In 1969, I remember we called a strike. That strike lasted about six or seven weeks, I recall. And I was a young fellow, just got married, you know, now you have no income, but we all had to go and meet every day at a hall. And at the hall, we were all assigned different things to do during the strike. Some were assigned to go picket the fields, some are assigned to go take care of medical problems that the people had, you know how to handle these things. Some are assigned to all kinds of stuff. Some had to even fix the cars that we were going to use for union business. And most of the other people had to go picket down in the fields to picket, you know, areas. My father-in-law says, "Hey, why don't you become our secretary? We need a secretary for the strike committee." He said, "You could read and write a lot. So we want you to be Secretary." So I say, "Yeah, it might be a little bit easier job." (laughs)

HARVEY 00:23:42

That's right! (laughs)

CLAYTON 00:23:42

So that's why I got to be a secretary at that union. And I had to make reports every day, submit it to the guy that would go over to the main local office, in Lihue, and written reports; read the minutes every day. And you know, I said, "This job is a little bit harder than being a picnic!" But it was a lot of, you know, a lot of work, but I kind of enjoyed it. I remember, in 1969 Harry Bridges came to give us support. He came to the hall and everybody was there, the families were there. And Harry said, you know, "We'll back you guys up all the way!" And I remember that today. When he came, and I was a secretary, because I was taking all of the minutes at that time. And I don't know if the minutes are still around for it, too, but I assume it's there.

HARVEY 00:24:33

They probably are.

CLAYTON 00:24:35

So that's how I got started in the Union.

HARVEY 00:24:39

After 69, did you get involved in more union activity?

CLAYTON 00:24:43

Yes, I became. I became an officer in our unit. See, each unit has a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer. So I became an officer in the unit. And then the Kaua'i Division, which is part of that— You know, you have the local and then you have all the divisions. The division director came to see me, he said, "Hey! I want you to come work for us at Lihue." At Lihue, which is the main town. The local's island office. So I said, "For what?"

HARVEY 00:25:09

The what?

CLAYTON 00:25:11

He says, "I want to change you to a business agent."

CLAYTON 00:25:21

And I said, "Is this going to be hard?"

CLAYTON 00:25:24

And he says, "No, I think you can handle it." So he called me and said he wanted to meet with me and my wife on this. So I brought my wife along and then he can explain to my wife what he was trying to do, and he says, "Don't get mad, because your husband's going to be late. He's going to be late to come home. He's going to sometimes have to do fellowship with the other workers, but I want to train him." And my wife said, "Yeah, go ahead." And he said, "Okay." So I started as a temporary business agent. Whenever a full time business agent went on vacation or was sick they'd call me and this was about 1978.

HARVEY 00:25:58

Okay, what was his name, again?

CLAYTON 00:26:00

His name was Haruo Dyna—D-Y-N-A. Everybody knows him as "Dyna" Nakamoto. That was our Division Director.

HARVEY 00:26:14

So did you become a BA [Business Agent] after that?

CLAYTON 00:26:16

In 1982, I was brought in as a temporary to somebody— Dyna retired, and another business agent went and moved up to Division Director and I came in as a temporary to fill out the business agent's term until 19— I think it was 1983.

HARVEY 00:26:34

Okay, was that an elected [post]? Did you have to go stand for elections? [phone ringing]

CLAYTON 00:26:38

The first—[phone ringing] The first time they brought me in, I was temporary for a while. And then I had to run for election when the term was up, and I ran for election.

HARVEY 00:26:48

Okay, how'd you do in the election?

CLAYTON 00:26:51

I won. I became a business agent, and I never lost until I was— Up until 1994. [? Around that time?] I think it was— At first it was only two years they went to run and then it was a three year term. Then in 1994, the local needed somebody to be a vice president of the local, because there was a— The local vice president had passed away. His name was [?Ray Polina?] so my division director moved up. They asked him to— They actually kind of appointed him to move it to be the local vice president. So he moved and he was my director. And so now there's a vacancy. They told me to go and take the director's place. I said, "Well, I'm not the type of guy that wants to be a division director." But they said, "No, no, you can. So in 1994, I started as a division director.

HARVEY 00:27:46

Okay, so how long are you a division director?

CLAYTON 00:27:49

I stayed until I retired in 2010.

HARVEY 00:27:53

Okay. Going back, what did you do as a BA? Can you describe the job you did as a BA?

CLAYTON 00:28:00

When I first started as a BA, the first thing that they tell you to do is you got to learn how to negotiate. And I went along and just watched and listened when they had negotiating sessions at all the different companies. You had to go service your units. They assigned you units, or companies, and basically my units were the sugar industry. I did have some other— what they call "general trades" kinds of units— I had a laundry that I had to go service and at the time, and we did a lot of immigration work for our fellow Filipino brothers and sisters who had families in the Philippines and who had the opportunity to bring in here. I also was in charge of the sports program that the local had, the statewide sports program, and we would play in tournaments, etcetera. And so is all fellowship stuff with local members. We had to help people to apply for Social Security. At the time, Social Security, you would have to bring people in and some of them could not relay what they really wanted to do. Some had some language barriers, from the Philippines. So we would be assigned to do these types of work.

HARVEY 00:29:20

Did you work with Ah Quon [McElrath] on any of that?

CLAYTON 00:29:22

I worked with Ah Quon many times, and Ah Quon was one— She's a brilliant lady! She also came to Kaua'i to help organize, and we were holding signs to you know, for the voters to— people to vote for ILWU Local 142. And I remember the first time she came, we were down at one of the resorts area. We were trying to hotel— We were trying to organize a pension, and Ah Quon was there for that. So I knew Ah Quon very well. Yeah.

HARVEY 00:29:53

How about Wesley [Furtado] did you work with Furtado very much?

CLAYTON 00:29:56

I worked with Wesley when he first came into the union, and they assigned him as an organizer to Kaua'i, and he and I worked a lot together. And of course if you organize, you have to go find people in bars, you have to go find people in all different kinds of places, and I felt— Wesley had family on Kauai.

HARVEY 00:30:16

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:30:17

So he's a little bit younger than I am, but we all went out together and you know, we tried to organize all the different hotels, and he was assigned to our island for quite a while.

HARVEY 00:30:28

Do you remember any stories about organizing with Wesley that illustrates the way he did things?

CLAYTON 00:30:35

Well, Wesley was a guy that he could he could really— He could get along with all different types of people. And you know, he was a very nice guy, always smiling, always joking around with people. And he had a way of talking to the local people who work in hotels, and who worked in other industries and you know, "Hey— You guys want to have a few beers?" About how, you know, "what's your job like?" And all that, but he had a way of getting into their [?events?] and convincing them to join the union. And he was assigned to Kaua'i for quite a while.

HARVEY 00:31:11

Oh, that's very good. Um, what did you do as a unit director?

CLAYTON 00:31:17

I would oversee whatever my business agents were assigned to. I had to go to meetings on Oahu to help every— I think it was every month— Local executive committee, to address all of the issues that we had in the local. We had to plan for conventions, to plan for— My island, I had to have division executive board meetings. And I had some units that was pretty much overloaded to the business agents, so I handled some of the smaller units and I handled some longshore units. In fact, in the end, I was handling the longshore units until they became a division by themselves.

HARVEY 00:32:00

Oh, you were?

CLAYTON 00:32:01

Yeah.

HARVEY 00:32:01

Wow.

CLAYTON 00:32:02

So I kind of learned about all these [? loans?], etcetera, on the, in the islands.

HARVEY 00:32:09

That's remarkable. And you retired in 2010?

CLAYTON 00:32:13

I retired officially in 2010.

HARVEY 00:32:15

Okay. Let me take a look at this.

RON 00:33:15

[Extended question about a longshoreman who bought a hotel and had some dealings with a hotel. Clayton was not familiar with him.]

HARVEY 00:34:37

Did you ever sit in negotiations with Wesley?

CLAYTON 00:34:41

Oh, yes. Wesley helped me with negotiations a lot.

HARVEY 00:34:45

How'd he do that? Tell us a story about that.

CLAYTON 00:34:49

I think Wesley helped me when I was negotiating the Hyatt Hotel.

HARVEY 00:34:53

What year was that, approximately?

CLAYTON 00:34:55

Hyatt Hotel was— I negotiated four or five contracts with them. It was in the early 2000s, I believe. And they had a problem in regards to the medical section, and we wanted to start up something new. So Wesley was kind of working on it. He would come in intermittently and I would call him from Honolulu, or wherever he was, and he would come in and he would be explaining our medical demands, you know, and how we would, how we wanted it to have our medical done. So Wesley helped me a lot on the medical section of our negotiations.

HARVEY 00:35:34

How does he deal with the employer?

CLAYTON 00:35:36

He was okay with the employer, I guess.

HARVEY 00:35:39

What does that mean? "Okay?" "He was okay with the employer?"

CLAYTON 00:35:41

Well, every once in a while, when you negotiate, when you see somebody come into the room and, you know, you can kind of tell by their— The way that they look at you, and whatever. Wesley had this kind of understanding with the principal negotiator for the Hyatt, and she was a lady, she was an attorney from San Francisco. My memory is kind of lapsing. I forgot her name, but I negotiated, I think, three or four contracts with her. And she was okay with Wesley. Wesley was okay with her. They kind— They could— We could give and take back and forth. Put it that way.

HARVEY 00:36:20

Okay, how about Big Bob [McElrath]? Did he ever come? Were you ever in negotiations with Big Bob?

CLAYTON 00:36:24

I've never been in negotiations with Big Bob. I met Big Bob, I believe it was in 1991, in Seattle. There was an International Convention in Seattle, and that's where I first met Big Bob.

HARVEY 00:36:38

What are your impressions of him?

CLAYTON 00:36:40

Oh, he was a tough looking guy at that time! He was coming out— He was still working. You know, he wasn't an officer. And, you know, I met him. He came to talk to me, he said, "You guys from Hawaii. I want to get to

know you guys; [you guys] are all laid back." And all these kinds of stuff. And so we became good friends for a long time.

HARVEY 00:36:57

Oh, you did?

CLAYTON 00:36:58

Yeah.

HARVEY 00:36:58

Okay. What other interactions did you have with Big Bob?

CLAYTON 00:37:03

Basically, my interactions with Big Bob— Mostly, you know, we'd meet and we'd talk stories, etcetera, and we'd have a few beers together. I remember going once to San Francisco and he and my local president at that time were having a few, and so I said, "Hey, you two guys have gotta stop it!" You know. It was Bobo [Eusebio] Lapenia

HARVEY 00:37:27

They were having a feud, you said?

CLAYTON 00:37:29

They were having "a few!" (laughs)

HARVEY 00:37:30

Oh! a few beers!

CLAYTON 00:37:32

Yeah. And "a few" became many. (laughs)

HARVEY 00:37:34

Yes. What happened?

CLAYTON 00:37:36

You'll edit this! (laughs)

HARVEY 00:37:38

Well, we'll see what happens. What happened that night? Do you remember?

CLAYTON 00:37:42

I remember they got plastered, that's all. You know, after the meeting. This is all happening, right? You know, they were pretty good together, you know Bo and—

RON 00:37:51

They're very close friends now.

HARVEY 00:37:56

What do you think of Big Bob's legacy, looking back at Big Bob's period as president?

CLAYTON 00:38:02

Big Bob's period as president? I— Well, I really— Well, he's done okay, I guess. Because I haven't worked as much with him. And, you know, basically Big Bob, he kind of helped us a lot with the longshore side and on the mainland side. And he left Hawaii for Hawai'i. He would always support us, but you know, so I really cannot describe, you know, how— But he was a good president, in my opinion.

HARVEY 00:38:36

Sure, sure, sure.

CLAYTON 00:38:37

He was very strong in the longshore.

HARVEY 00:38:39

Yeah. You retired in 2010. What have you done since 2010 with yourself, after retiring?

CLAYTON 00:38:47

Myself?

HARVEY 00:38:48

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:38:48

I've done a lot of [?"honey do"?] things, you know?

HARVEY 00:38:54

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:38:55

I got to take care of my grandchildren, who are still young yet. I am still a member of the [?Bar?] Association. That's the association from the local 142 that takes care of the buildings and all the properties. I'm also a trustee with the VEBA Program that the ILWU started when Bobo was the president.

HARVEY 00:38:55

When Bo was president?

CLAYTON 00:38:57

Yeah. Bo was on it— He was a retiree trustee, the only one, and he wanted to resign for a little while or take a leave a little while and he brought me in and then he'd never come back, so I'm still there! (laughs)

HARVEY 00:39:39

You used the term "VEBA" I don't know it. I should—

CLAYTON 00:39:42

It's the Voluntary Employees Benefit plan—for Associates, or something like that.

HARVEY 00:39:51

You're still doing that?

CLAYTON 00:39:53

Yeah. And that's a plan where, I guess, people deduct money from their union kitty and put it aside so that later on, when they retire, they can have some benefits for medical.

HARVEY 00:40:06

Yeah. Did you do anything else with the union? I mean, that's like enough, but do you do other things with the union?

CLAYTON 00:40:12

I still go to union executive board meetings [? on ?]. I participate in political action there, as a retiree. I help campaign for political— the ones that we endorse.

HARVEY 00:40:28

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:40:28

I help coordinate the pensioners program on Kawai'i, and plan a picnic every year, around Labor Day. And— Yeah.

HARVEY 00:40:40

Do they have anything comparable to the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association here on the mainland? In other words, are they as active? Do they have an organization that is as substantial as this coastwide one?

CLAYTON 00:40:55

Not as substantial as the West Coast one, but we do have an organization. We have our bylaws and rules and regs and all of that. We do meet every two years for a convention from all the different clubs, pensioners clubs that we have on the island. And it's funded by the Memorial Association.

HARVEY 00:41:15

I see. What's it called? What's its name?

CLAYTON 00:41:17

It's called the ILWU Statewide Pensions Association. And a lot of the pensioners are basically from the first people that were there, the first companies: sugar, pineapple. They hold a majority of the members. And then now we are having the newer members coming from tourism and different trades and all of that coming out to these clubs .

HARVEY 00:41:42

And do you have any feeling at all about the transition from agriculture to tourism? It's sort of— You sort of left the sugar plantation work you had kind of at the right time— (laughing) Because sugar was going to go away. You know? Fairly quickly.

CLAYTON 00:42:02

Well, the reason we left, because they closed the companies

HARVEY 00:42:05

Sure.

CLAYTON 00:42:05

You know? and I, and it was more steady work to me, as far as the sugar plantations was concerned. It was steady work, you know. And the hotels have a tendency to— Companies that run a hotel, even though they have a contract, if they have an opportunity to sell and gain some profit a lot, you know, they sell. Then you have to renegotiate again, you have to try to reorganize if the company does not want to take back the [?old percent?]. That's a problem that we had with the old Kauai Surf and they became a Westin hotel. Then after that, it went down and then all of the workers were let go; a new guy comes in. He rebuilt the hotel. They're non-union, they don't want any union. So we lost a lot of members that we—

HARVEY 00:42:58

You had to have to try to reorganize—

CLAYTON 00:43:00

You have to try to reorganize.

HARVEY 00:43:02

Yeah, yeah. He never did ever meet Jack Hall, or did he pass away too early.

CLAYTON 00:43:07

I met Jack Hall.

HARVEY 00:43:08

Oh you met Jack, yeah—

CLAYTON 00:43:10

Yes. At meetings I met Jack Hall, and, you know he passed away in 1966, I believe it was?

HARVEY 00:43:22

I think it was a little bit later.

CLAYTON 00:43:24

I just started— not too long. I remember, I started work at the plantation and he was still there. Sixty-nine was it? I've forgotten.

HARVEY 00:43:34

He passed away in office.

CLAYTON 00:43:36

Yeah.

HARVEY 00:43:41

And I can't come up with the name [date?]. I met him briefly before he passed away and I can't remember exactly what date it was, what point in time it was.

HARVEY 00:43:51

Did you have any questions, Conor. Okay, go ahead.

CONOR 00:43:56

This is kind of a big one. It's going to be a couple parts (laughs) One of the things you talked about was the way in which there was sort of an ethnic segmentation of the labor force on the plantations, and that they kind of divided workers based on their ethnic groups, and that there was almost a hierarchy with a graduated numbering system. And then, you also talked a little bit about the feelings between the families, the cultures, the Japanese and the Filipinos. Do you think that that was something that was from somewhere else? Or was it created by the plantation hierarchy? You know what I'm saying? Like—

CLAYTON 00:44:37

No, I think it was the philosophy or basically from somewhere else. The plantation tried to create villages where you'd have different nationalities live for all these people, even though they lived in different camps, what they call at that time, they all kind of got together, and they all worked together. That's why— it was— My family side, on the Japanese side, their culture was different to see another person of different nationality and culture coming to the family. And I think they kind of regretted that at first. And they were kind of hostile at that time, you know. So my dad, they gave a very hard time, trying to date my mom, etcetera. But at the plantations, according to what my father-in-law, and my mother-in-law told me, because they worked at the plantation, and they lived in the plantation houses— They say that even though they lived in different camps, everybody got along together.

CONOR 00:45:36

And the second question I have is, you know, the plantations wanted that. As you pointed out, they wanted that to divide the workers, but they weren't really able to do that. Can you talk about that— It doesn't seem like it's like that in Hawai'i now. A lot of people have a much broader conception of their own interconnected ethnicity. Can you talk about how you think the union might have had something to do with that? How they learned to work together and maybe how they— Do you think that there's any way that the organizing of 142 had something to do with that? Or do you think that 142 grew out of that? You know? What's the relationship between those things?

CLAYTON 00:46:11

Well, I think 142 had a lot to do with that, because if you went to one of the older union type meetings, they've got all different nationalities there. All different, from all different sections of the sugar company, and the pineapple companies. They all would be, you know, seeking the same goal. So they're all kind of fighting for the same issues, etcetera.

CLAYTON 00:46:30

And, and now in Hawai'i, a lot of people— You don't even think about it! You know, you've got families with all different races. I've got my grandchildren, they've got Hawaiian, they've got German, they've got Filipino, Japanese, Portuguese. So one of my grandchild is six, I think, [with] different nationalities in her, you know? And nobody talks about it, you know, basically— Maybe a few, but most of the people, you know, we call "Hawaiian", and I believe because of the union, I think, eventually everybody was recognized to be: "Hey! You from Hawai'i? Whatever nationality you are, you're still Hawaiian?" And it's basically a good thing to be.

RON 00:47:16

The longshoreman organized, or tried to in 1909 in Hawai'i and were defeated, then again in 1917. And again, they were always defeated in the early period. They would go out and get a different group of people, bring them in to replace the others. The workforce is now sort of a rainbow. The longshore workforce in Honolulu. Is it?

CLAYTON 00:47:54

Yeah. It's all a rainbow of people.

RON 00:47:58

You know in the 1950s to, maybe '60s, they migrated to the West Coast.

CLAYTON 00:48:06

Yes.

RON 00:48:07

There were 20 in the first batch to Seattle. I don't know if any of them went back to Hawai'i when times got better, but when they got hard they would come to the United States; had jobs here.

CLAYTON 00:48:28

I know a family that lived in Waimea, where I grew up, they had to move. I think they went to the Washington area and the name's— his name is Rufus [?Kulkarni?]. Rufus [?Kulkarni?] retired up in the mainland. And I remember because his wife, when I was going to high school, she used to work in the cafeteria. She was a nice pretty lady, always pleasant. And I remember that she had to move with her husband to the mainland because the longshore work was up here and they never moved back. You know, I see every once in a while the family members come home, because one daughter was left there. And I remember that family, particularly, Rufus [?Kulkarni?], his name. He was a Hawaiian guy. And he had to move to the mainland. You know, there was some other people that I met that moved up there, but I didn't know them at the time they moved, you know,

RON 00:49:20

They adopted Anglicized names, many of them.

CLAYTON 00:49:25

Yes.

RON 00:49:27

Yeah.

CONOR 00:49:29

Maybe I missed this part. I'm sorry if they didn't pick up on it. I remember you talking about the offices you served within the union. What offices did you serve for your retiree organization?

CLAYTON 00:49:41

Right now?

CONOR 00:49:41

Yeah.

CLAYTON 00:49:42

I'm for my own unit, my club. I'm the secretary treasurer of the club. And other than that, I'm not a state officer. I'm a director with the board of the Memorial Association.

HARVEY 00:50:00

He did say Bo Lapenia kind of sucked him in to do it and left it. Just it's how it's done, you know!

CLAYTON 00:50:10

(laughs) I still see Bo every once in a while, you know, he did not attend the last conference. We had a retirees conference. I think it was up in the mainland or something but the ones before that he always and he used to call me to his room and say "Hey. Let's have a little [?drink?] together." So you know Bobo, how he is. I've known him for a long time, when he was a business agent too, and I was a business agent. You know, we'd go to local conventions and we'd always stay up a little bit late! (laughs) I remember going to Vancouver, the International Convention, with Bo and he missed the boat; the ferry took [us] from [inaudible] to Vancouver Island or whatever it was. He came in by plane! He flew on one of those float planes! (laughs) I have been friends with many years, for a long time!

HARVEY 00:51:05

Anything else? Do you have any, like looking back, any comments on the union or on your life experience? It's kind of a wrap up.

CLAYTON 00:51:15

Yeah. You know, for me, I always thought that I could go to college, you know, when I first graduated from high school. But my plans were kind of deterred. Put on side when I got married, had a child, then had another child. And then when I started working for the plantation, which was unionized in Local 142, I said, "Maybe I'll stay here for a little while." But then I got to see what was happening in the union. I got to be involved in a union. The company came to see me several times to be a supervisor. And I said, "No, no, no, no, no. I kind of have different ideas about my life." And even my boss, who was a former union member, at my carpenter's shop said, "No. You don't want to be a supervisor. Stay where you are. The union is a good thing." So I kind of took his advice, and I stayed with the union. I have no regrets! I have, I brought up my family, I have no regrets. I had, you know, decent wages. I, I— My son went to college, you know, he was the first in my family to graduate from college. I've now got grandkids going to college. And the union gave me a better life. And if I had to do things over again, I would not change it, you know, even though I started off really hard, but in the end, it was very satisfying to me. You know? And I still preach about the unions, to my family, and I'm proud to say that all my— My three sons and my daughter always follow that. When they say "I've got to work for this person?" You know, and they're all kind of union-oriented. My oldest son is— He asked me, "Dad, when you became a business agent. How was it?" I said, "Why?" He said, "I'm kind of taking a look at being a business agent for the IBEW." He's an electrician. And I said, "Well, your kids are a little bit small there. Try to wait." He told me afterward, he said, "Nah." He's a union man, too, and I'm very proud of it.

HARVEY 00:53:34

It's great. I think we got it.

CLAYTON 00:53:35

Okay.

HARVEY 00:53:36

Thank you very much.